

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

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----- 014367

R 131727Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6338

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR BF US

SUBJ: ANDROS TOWN AIRFIELD, ANDROS ISLAND, BAHAMAS

REF: (A) NASSAU 1757, 10/16/74; (B) STATE 269069, 12/9/74

CNO PASS TO OP-613

1. BACKGROUND: UPON EMBASSY RECEIPT OF GCOB NOTE REPORTED REF A, DCM CONTACTED PERMSEC MINEXTAFF REQUESTING CLARIFICATION OF GCOB REPLY. PERMSEC STATED HE DID NOT FEEL IT NECESSARY TO JUSTIFY HIS GOVERNMENT'S REPLY ADDING THE RECORD DID NOT SUPPORT GRANTING THE CONFIRMATION REQUESTED.

2. PERMSEC ALSO STATED THE USE OF THE ANDROS TOWN AIRFIELD WAS A BUSINESS MATTER BETWEEN THE USG AND THE OWNERS OF THE AIRFIELD ADDING HE PERSONALLY FELT LANDING FEES WERE JUSTIFIED IF THE PROSPECTIVE BUYER DID NOT DESIRE TO CONTINUE WITH THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT. HE DID TELL THE DCM THAT THE GCOB WOULD NOT SUPPORT AN EFFORT BY THE PROSPECTIVE OWNERS TO EXCLUDE AUTECH FROM CONTINUING TO USE THE ANDROS TOWN AIRFIELD. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT SAY WHAT THE GCOB WOULD OR COULD DO SHOULD THIS ISSUE ARISE.

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3. ANALYSIS: AT THIS POINT IN TIME WE ARE DEALING WITH A

THEORETICAL PROBLEM WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT MATERIALIZE INTO A MATTER OF PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCE TO THE US. SPECIFICALLY:

(A) WE ARE NOT PAYING LANDING FEES NOW, (B) WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THAT FIELD WILL BE SOLD TO NEW INTEREST (THE JAN 6 CLOSING DATE PASSED WITHOUT THE SALE BEING CONCLUDED) AND (C) IF SALE IS CONSUMATED WE DO NOT KNOW THAT NEW OWNERS WILL INSIST ON CHARGING LANDING FEES.

4. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT GCOB POSITION AS STATED IN THE NOTE REPORTED REF A SHOULD REMAIN TOTALLY UNCHALLENGED. ON THE RECORD, THE GCOB HAS CATEGORICALLY DENIED ANY PREVIOUS COMMITMENT ON ITS PART WHILE THE US RECORD SHOWS GCOB REPRESENTATIVES ORALLY AGREED ANDROS TOWN AIRFIELD WAS "BEING OPERATED ON BEHALF OF THE GOBI". (UNFORTUNATELY US RECORD IS LESS THAN WHAT IT MIGHT BE AND EMBASSY IS NOT IN POSSESSION OF ANY WRITTEN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FROM GOBI OF THE ONE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION DURING WHICH COMMITMENT PURPORTEDLY MADE.)

5. IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE ANALYSIS, THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS ARE SUBMITTED:

A. CONTINUE WITH THE STATUS QUO WHILE WAITING TO SEE IF THE POTENTIAL PROBLEM DEVELOPS INTO A REAL ISSUE.

ADVANTAGES: DOES NOT EXACERBATE WHAT IS AN APPARENT SENSITIVE ISSUE AS REFLECTED IN THE PERMSEC'S COMMENTS WITH DCM REPORTED PARAGRAPH 1.

DISADVANTAGE: (A) COULD LEAVE GCOB WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT HAVING ACCEPTED THE NOTE REPORTED REF A, WITHOUT FURTHER USG COMMENTS, THE ISSUE IS SETTLED AND ACCEPTABLE TO USG.

(B) LEAVES RECORD UNABLANCED IN FAVOR OF GCOB WHICH COULD PROVE DETRIMENTAL, AT SOME LATER DATE, IF PROBLEM REGARDING USG USE OF ANDROS TOWN AIRFIELD ACTUALLY DEVELOPS.

B. REPLY TO GCOB NOTE, AT THIS TIME, INFORMING GCOB THAT ITS REPLY TO OUR NOTE IS INCONSISTENT WITH OUT UNDERSTANDING OF THE RECORD AND THEREFORE THE USG WOULD LIKE TO FURTHER PURSUE THE ISSUE IN DUE COURSE.

ADVANTAGE: (A) WILL MAKE CLEAR TO GCOB THAT THE PERMSEC'S ADAMANT REPLY IS UNACCEPTABLE TO USG WITHOUT FURTHER AIRING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE RECORD.

(B) WILL RETURN THE RECORD TO A NEUTRAL CONDITION AND ACT AS A HOLDING ACTION UNTIL AND IF THE ISSUE DEVELOPS.

DISADVANTAGE: DOES NOTHING TO IMMEDIATELY (REPEAT IMMEDIATELY) RESOLVE ISSUE.

C. AMBASSADOR REQUEST MEETING WITH MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AT THIS TIME TO PRESENT THE USG RECORD AND CASE.

ADVANTAGE: (A) WILL ENGAGE GCOB AT HIGHER LEVEL WITH PURPOSE OF SEEKING DEFINITIVE RESOLUTION OF ISSUE.

DISADVANTAGES: (A) MAY NOT RESULT IN A FAVORABLE DECISION.

(B) IS LIKELY TO PROVE TO BE AN IRRITANT IN US-GCOB RELATIONS.

(C) WOULD REQUIRE WE ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH A RECORD OF OUR OWN WHICH IS LESS THAN AIR TIGHT.

(D) REQUIRES TAKING THE ABOVE RISK IN ABSENCE OF A WELL-DEFINED ISSUE, I.E., WE MAY NEVER BE ASKED TO PAY LANDING FEES OR OTHERWISE HAVE OUR USE OF THE FIELD RESTRICTED.

D. SAME ACTION AS IN OPTION C BUT ONLY AFTER ISSUE BECOMES WELL-DEFINED.

ADVANTAGE: WILL RESOLVE ISSUE.

DISADVANTAGE: NONE OTHER THAN THE UNAVOIDABLE IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONS.

6. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS EXERCISING OPTION B AT THIS TIME AND OPTION D WHEN AND IF THE ISSUE BECOMES DEFINED. (IN THIS LATTER CONNECTION, EVEN ASSUMING WE ARE AT SOME POINT ASKED TO PAY LANDING FEES WE WOULD WANT A DOD DETERMINATION THAT THIS WAS A MORE EXPENSIVE OR OTHERWISE LESS ADVANTAGEOUS ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUED COST TO U.S. IN MAINTAINING FIELD.)

7. SHOULD, DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORT TO THE CONTRARY, ISSUE OF PAYING LANDING FEES BE FORCED UPON US, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS AN EXCHANGE OF NOTES SEEKING A GCOB GUARANTEE THAT THE AIRFIELD BE MAINTAINED IN A CONDITION ACCEPTABLE TO SAFELY SUPPORT AUTECH OPERATIONS. OTHERWISE, WE COULD FIND OURSELVES IN A POSITION WHERE WE MIGHT NOT ONLY BE PAYING LANDING FEES BUT AT SOME LATER DATE BE FORCED EITHER TO PAY FOR RECONDITIONING THE ANDROS TOWN AIRFIELD OR AT LEAST SUPPLEMENT THE COST BECAUSE THE PRIVATE OWNER HAS FAILED TO KEEP THE AIR-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FIELD IN A CONDITION ACCEPTABLE FOR AUTECH OPERATIONS.

8. PLEASE ADVISE IF EMBASSY IS TO PROCEED AS RECOMMENDED IN PARAGRAPH 6 OR WHETHER DEPT OR DOD DESIRES ANOTHER COURSE OF ACTION TO BE TAKEN.

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